



From August 2017 (Volume 78)





In early August 2017 I met Cristina in Brick Lane. She was a professional photographer and Lynn had bought me a 4 hour session with her as a birthday present. I chose Brick Lane as the location. It was a wet day but we really got some great shots and so many that I even managed to produce a 70 page hard-backed book with some of the resulting shots added to shots from a later visit. Therefore I have only used this one and the one on the cover. The rest are in my book (**Around Brick Lane**)





Photo History



In August we went, once again , to Heddon's Gate Hotel . New owners but other than a renovation (which was probably overdue) it was like coming home. The whole area has so many lovely memories and it is like a time warp. The views and setting are even nicer for having been away for so long



We seem to have a set pattern to our stay. Once we have settled into our room we then walk from Hunter's Inn along the clear River Heddon to Heddon's Mouth and that walk is well maintained and as lovely as ever

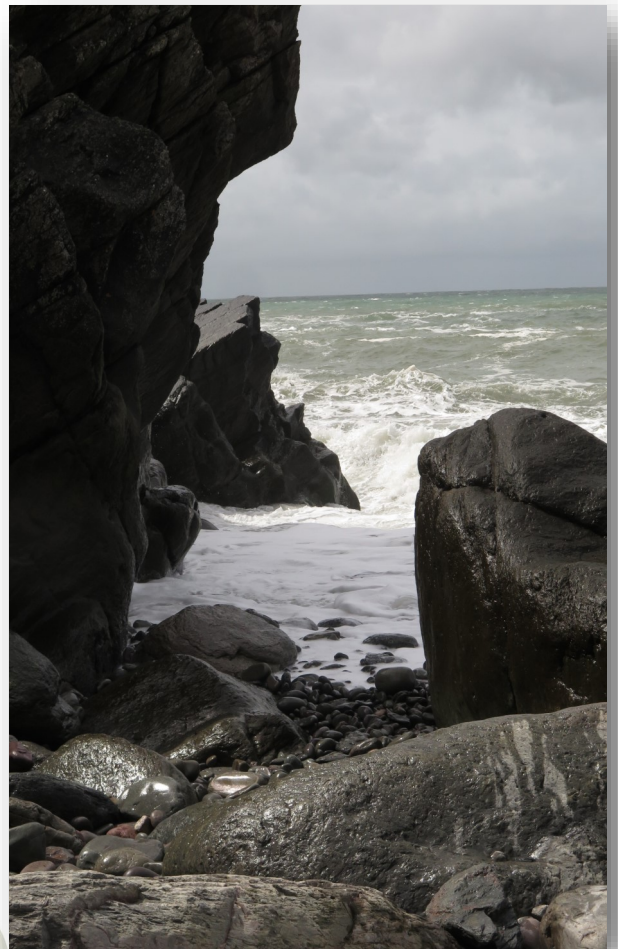




Photo History



We can spend hours here doing really important things like watching and listening to the waves crashing onto the rocks....and of course piling up the smaller rocks into ever more precarious towers until they collapse and we burst out laughing





Heddon's Valley from Heddon's Gate Hotel Terrace



The stunning cliff-top path





We never tire of the walk to Lynton on the cliff-top path





The colours, the birds the insects and the views all combine to make this a very special walk



Suitable habitat for the High Brown Fritillary consists of frequent Common Dog-violet plants growing amongst a shallow layer of bracken litter.

Restoring habitats

Butterfly Conservation has worked closely with the National Trust and other private landowners to restore habitats for High Brown Fritillaries in Heddon Valley.

Cattle and ponies have been reintroduced. They break up the dense layer of dead bracken at the end of the winter, and leave narrow tracks through tall bracken stands in the summer, creating a mosaic of grass and bracken where violets can flourish.

Where grazing is not possible, teams of volunteers have bashed tall bracken to mimic the effect of grazing animals and create a patchwork of bracken and grassy patches. Scrub and trees have been cleared from 16 sites so far, maintaining the open bracken habitat and



One of the many waterfalls sparkling through the trees down to the sea below



The damp steep valley near Woody Bay allow these beautiful mosses and lichens to flourish



Ley Abbey run a small, perfectly situated tea cottage manned by smiling volunteers where we always enjoy a bowl of home-made soup or tea and cheese scones in the beautiful gardens



One of the other regular guests



Countisbury Hill. The Descent from Porlock and Exmoor into Lynton with 25% gradients for a short distance





Lynmouth, lying directly below Lynton, seems to be in a delightful time-warped and remains as beautiful as always





The clear fast-flowing River Lynn viewed through a fallen tree

..and Lynn deep in thought
looking at the River Lynn





Around this time of year, depending on weather conditions, we find the woodland area at Whitewebbs full of assorted fungi and this year we found some wonderful varieties and delicate colours





Photo History







Photo History

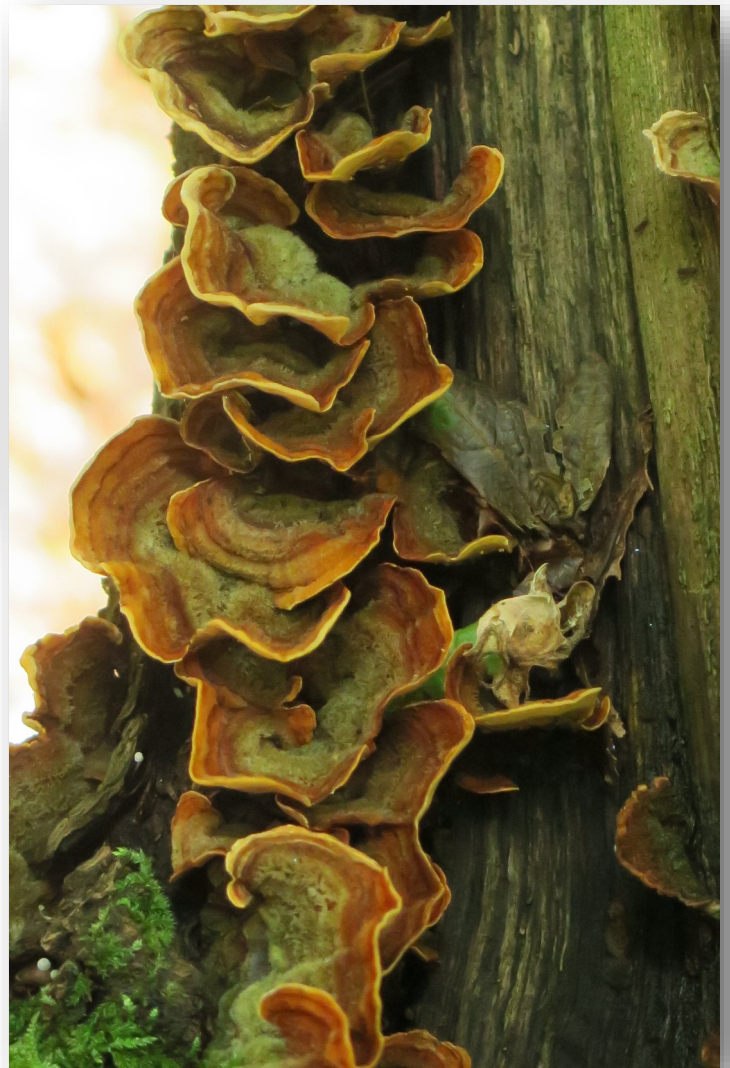






Photo History





Photo History



Fig. 2.





Photo History





Photo History



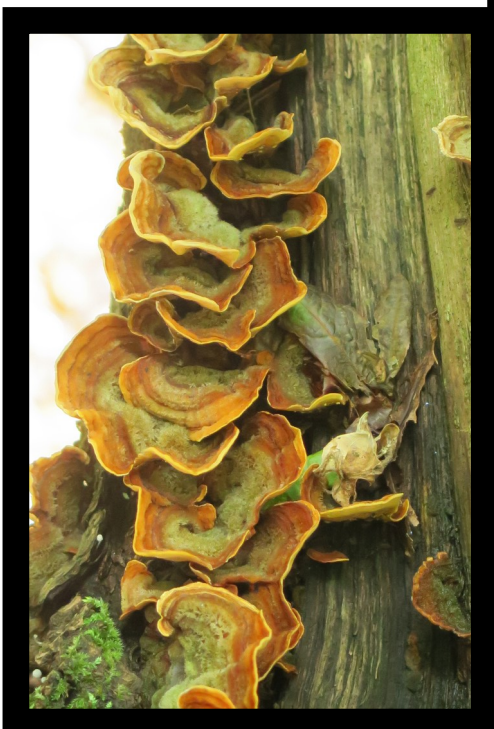
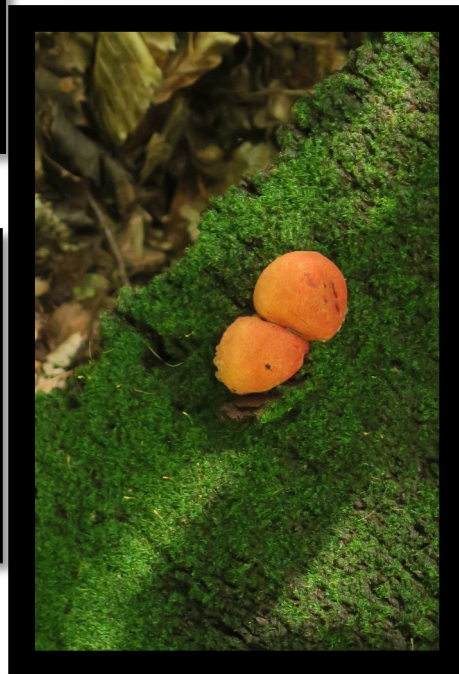


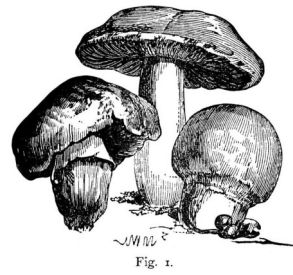


Photo History





Photo History









Ivor and Judy got a Brick Lane quiz as a wedding anniversary gift and assembled two teams: "Old Farties" and "Old Arties"..to assist in confounding their efforts in finding the clues. We won "Slowest Ever Team Event" and we celebrated by eating the trophy at a Japanese restaurant where we all collapsed at close of play



We were hopeless...couldn't even find the first clue



Jeff and Janet Fine



Joan



Judy



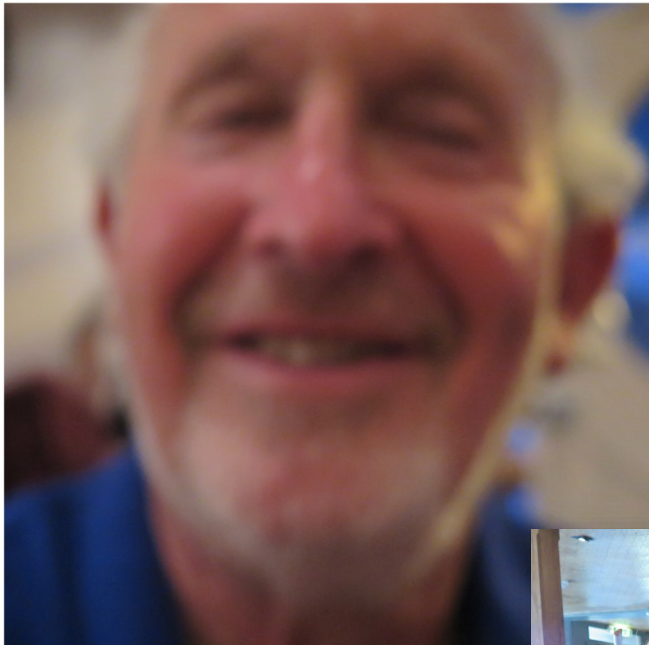
Lynn



Steve



Hunting for clues and a welcome
break halfway through



Ivor & Lynn



Corporate graffiti in between freelance wall graffiti . The way it is painted is quite high-tech utilising a cherry picker



The whole area is a really great palette of art work and has certainly changed in a very short while





The glade area at the back of the garden was a project that Lynn and I took on in September ..laying fabric sheets as a sealer to supress weed growth





Incredible Camden Colours





Photo History



Lynn and I took the train to Brighton
and enjoyed a great sunny day



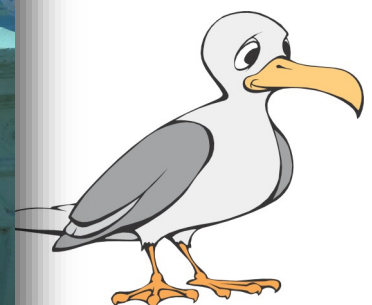
On the way to the beach we
found some great street -food



Tempura fresh fillets
of fish with hand cut
real chips and home-
made tartare sauce



...and we ignored the
hovering sea gulls
waiting for left over
chips...because there
weren't any





The Lanes, Brighton, and the remaining skeleton of the burnt-out pier





Photo History

Interesting silhouettes and the fascinating City skyline from the Canon Street Station platform taken from the train when we returned home





Photo History

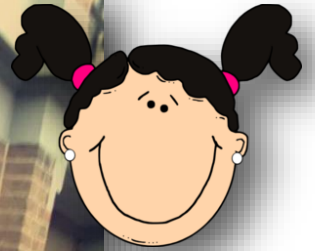
Camden Market on a sunny Sunday morning in Sept 2017 Enjoying chai in Pam Ban café and The Camden Beach and a great Amie Winehouse statue.



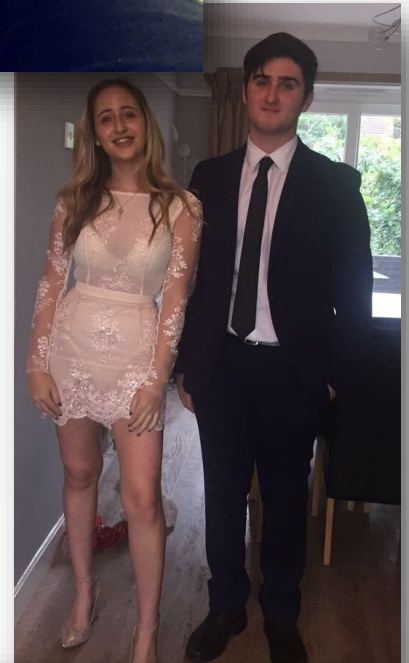




It suddenly occurred to me that there are phone photos that are on Google Photos so are not included in my normal photo runs so the next few pages are a mixture of various photos that seemed worth including here

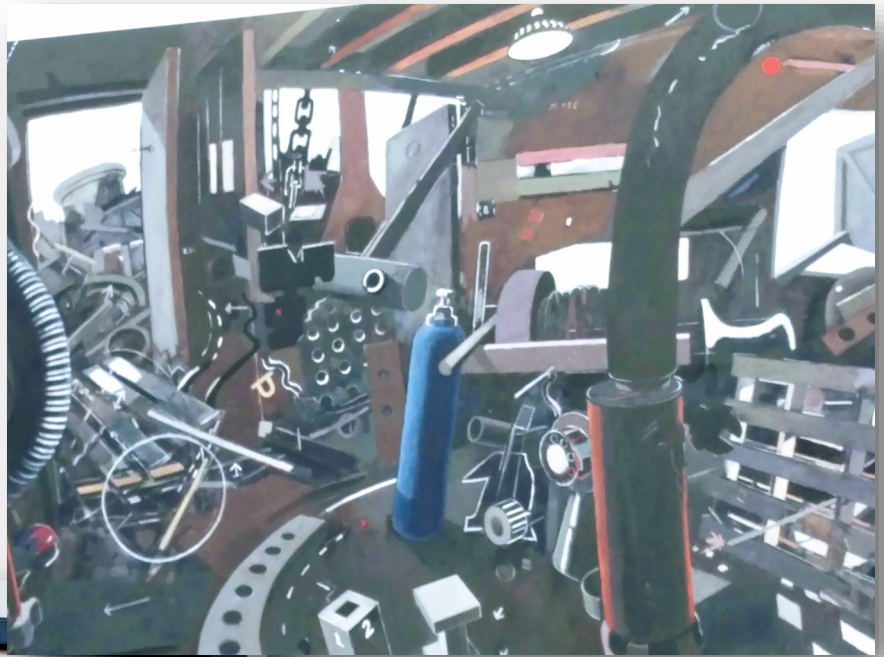


Larnie with Jake and with friends





At The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition I saw a lot of really inspirational works and the next two pages show some of these





This little girl was fascinated by this installation where the models were not much smaller than she was



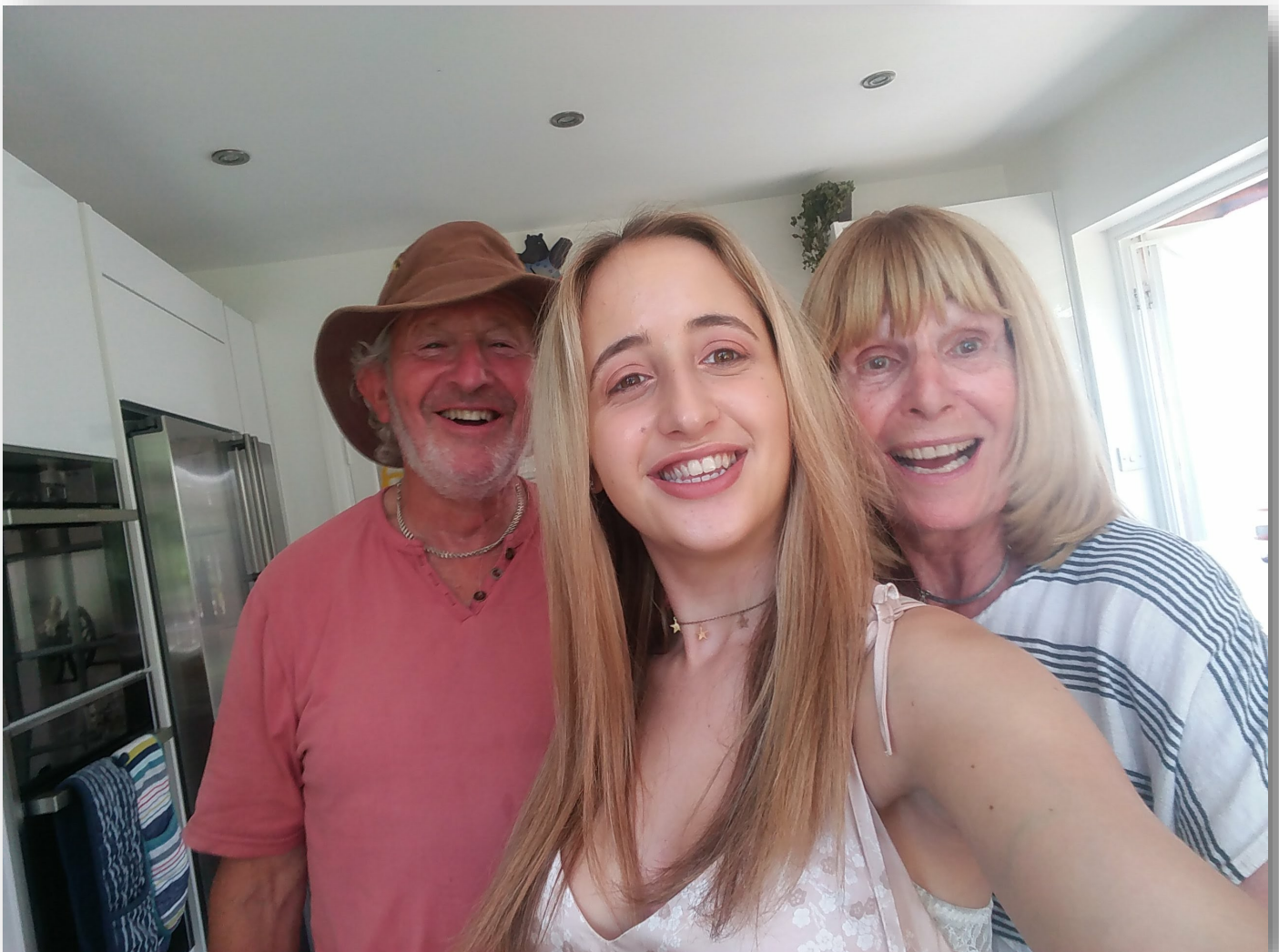
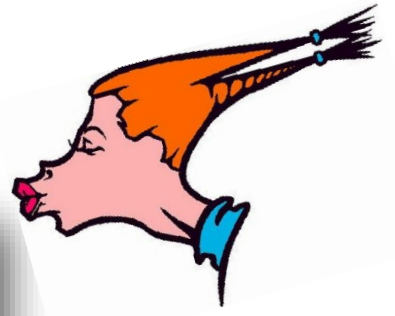




Photo History

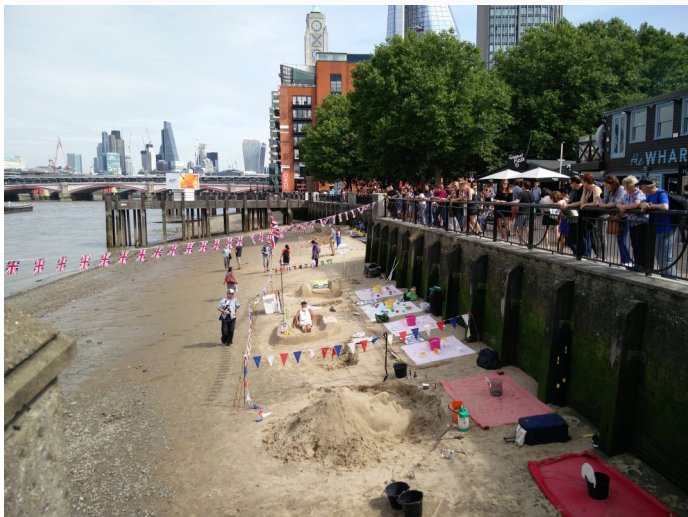
The Southbank walk is now a well established tourist 'must see' and these books show how it has improved over the years and we love it



There are now several sand sculpture artists on the small short-term beach



River Stage Festival outside the National Theatre



The 'Bubble Man' fascinating the kids



Photo History





DP chilling out under the Scots pine at the bottom of the garden in the 'Cocoon' that Lynn bought me





DP chilling out under the Scots pine at the bottom of the garden in the 'Cocoon' that Lynn bought me





Lynn and I stripped back the existing worn membrane and fitted new membrane and shingle covering exposing the stepping stones from the lawn area to the rear section. It looked great when finished





Photo History

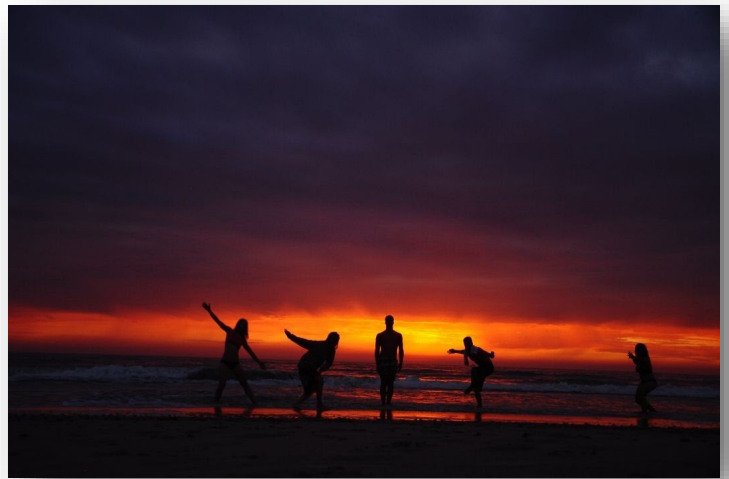


Our lovely Berlin family on holiday in Denmark.

Left to right (Hope I got it right !!)

Manu, Adam, Rey, Noga & Cinay

(Cinay is now back in Israel with Arnon & Noga joined them for a fortnight)



Rey on the beach





Photo History



It has been quite an eventful time since my last Photo-History entry.

Lynn seems to be in great health and we are really enjoying our very varied trips around the world and also here in the UK. She is due to see Dr.Nathan in mid September so hope all is good news there.. We are very positive and taking life as it comes.

Tammy and Ben are really enjoying , what seems like a reprieve, after the double transplant and Ben is in really great health now. No more daily dialysis , no more very strict diet and the best thing is they can now lead a normal life. The hospital are so pleased with his progress that he is now on a three week visit schedule, getting the tube to work after the daily taxi run and he is driving and feels great so we are delighted.

Larnie got fantastic A level results: A * for English / A for sociology / B for French (She got A* for her EPQ essay (extended project qualification) on freedom of speech.

She originally got an unconditional offer from City Uni. and an offer from Westminster too but she decided on City to study investigative journalism. She is currently sorting out accommodation. Seems like her life is changing so quickly and we are obviously very proud.

She is very happy with Jake and who knows what will happen on that front.

DP ran a very successful festival, Shambala, in Somerset and he is still travelling a lot. We manage to see him as often as his busy schedule allows and we are due to see him this coming weekend with the kids at Bristol and then all going all to a show in the woods on Saturday night As the show finishes quite late the coach was not available so we are driving down and I have just booked an overnight hotel stay

Beau is getting tall and very focussed on everything h does. His current love is his scramble bike that we were not over-keen on him having but I feel that Angela and DP will impress on him the need for sensible riding and there comes a time when one has to have faith in their sensible behaviour.

Peachy is also a delight and we often have informal chats on 'Whatsapp' . She just broke her arm in a trampoline accident and she is always so into athletics. We hope it wont leave any permanent damage preventing her from her athletic lifestyle.

We haven't seen Angela for a while but manage to have quick phone & Skype chats. She is busy sorting out Peachy's new school and I guess they will move from Radford Mill once the cold winter sets in

I chat to Rey from time to time and we get on well and I hope she manages to continue her studies in Berlin and achieves her desire to become a doctor. It is a real wrench after her free and fun former lifestyle so I know she won't find it easy to settle in one place and study. (Some pictures show them all)

On the personal front we seem to have more friends than ever and it is so great to share so much of our life with all these great friends, some that we have met in recent years and some that we seem to have had all our lives. It is a very busy lifestyle and we both really enjoy it.

While I write this Lynn is out with Sandra (a friend we only met 6 years ago) and together they are at Norma's (who is a school friend of Lynn's) so that says a lot for my lovely missus. A rant now follows...



Our thoughts and our personal feelings are exactly just that...**'personal'** It is our total right not to have anyone knowing what they are. Not because they are inconsequential but because they are ours.

I am becoming very aware that this is no longer true and in my opinion this is linked into covert surveillance.

I am not paranoid about this but I am very awake to the dangers and really think when this is read in years to come maybe I will be proved right. If not...maybe it can be put down to early senior dementia setting in !!!

I hate knowing I am watched constantly. In department stores I make a big show of putting my selected purchases into baskets so that it is obvious I am not going to make a run with them. Likewise going through the green channel at airports and finding myself in a vast empty area I know I am being watched and the watchers are trained to read suspicious body language. I am uncomfortable and probably because of my discomfort I display this 'suspicious body language' because I am on edge. I think possibly a note is put on my e-passport profile....."watch this guy". OK maybe I am being facetious here but within these words lie a real truth

When I put a search into Google I get different results from someone else using the same search criteria. Why? Google is geared to my known preferences. My phone tracks my movement. I found, quite by accident, that, logged on my phone, my walking and driving history for the previous month was stored. My emails are all open for anyone to see and my viewing history on the web is logged. One may, like me, be paranoid about this information being available for all to see. I repeat, that I delete history, for no dubious reason other than privacy, in the mistaken belief it is then permanently deleted. Not true. It is all still there for anyone with the knowhow to access and use.

Smart TVs monitor our watching habits and yes, they also watch and listen to us. Our entertainment preferences are logged and adverts appear selected especially for us. I really do not want an unknown listener or watcher to see me in front of my tv or pc.

One wonders that if one has a morbid curiosity about the seedier side of life, just in the same way we rubberneck and look at a motorway accident as we speed past. Then, when we use a controversial search term, is this setting off alarms in some hidden bunker filled with geeky watchers. Is our profile now red listed as a subversive to be watched?

Number plate recognition and face identity cameras slowly are building a universal bank of information. I sometimes think that the more one is a law-abiding citizen the more one is tagged.

Steal a car and put on cloned plates and you can probably drive for ever without getting tickets. I park for a few minutes over the set time and a hidden camera triggers off a fine that doubles if I don't pay speedily.

Buy a cloned credit card on the black web, go to a cash dispenser with a pulled-up hoodie to cover your head, and the chances are that you will not be noticed. Make low value withdrawals and who will recognise you? However, I withdraw over a pre-set limit (even if there is adequate funds on another account to cover this) and a massive charge is added to my account.

The reason is that I am easily found and accountable. Slowly, there is a underclass of people evolving, who fall below the radar. But that is not my main concern at the moment

There are many other big brother scenarios that really bug me and I will add a few to this rant.

Again I repeat, this is a slowly insidiously , increasing phenomenon that we take for granted and moan at, but nothing changes. If anyone makes enough noise about it there are apologies and promises that we will try harder This is not new but is increasing at an alarming scale.



Photo History

Take the scenario where I want to cancel an account: I phone the company listening to a recorded list of options none of which exactly fit my requirement. I chose the closest option. I am then held in a queue “due to the high volume of calls being experienced” I mumble to myself...” if you have had the foresight to make this recording then use this foresight to employ more staff for these high peak periods..there are loads of people looking for work”. I am subjected to awful music with a terrible quality. Every now and again I am told what my place in the queue is.

If they have this facility they must know people are waiting so employ more people. When eventually the call is answered (and it is me paying for this long unproductive call). Our anger is diffused by the operative who is constantly having to hear a barrage of complaints and he is trained to diffuse them. The first words are an apology for the long wait and we sheepishly say “no problem”.

We are then given a series of security questions. Recent reports show our data is often compromised and are not being able to ascertain if these are being kept confidential.

This is a crucial point. Our data—our information - our profile is highly personal and highly confidential and it is apparently so easy for computer literate individuals (often very young) to be able to easily infiltrate highly robust systems. It must lead us to wonder how much of our information is already in the hands of ...well this is where I am stymied. Possibly in the hands of corporations wanting to exploit this information for marketing purposes. Possibly in the hands of anarchists with evil intent. Possibly in the hands of governments (ours or others) with the intent to control us. Possibly in the hands of people who anonymously just want it to create havoc. None of these scenarios fill me with delight.

Anyway, I digress... we tell them that we wish to terminate our contract and are transferred to the relevant person (often after another lengthy wait and yet more apologies) Then a long script is read out about our rights etc.(and we are reminded that all this may be recorded for training and quality reasons. Yet if you ask for a copy it will never be forthcoming. Insisting, we are then allowed to terminate and (if you are lucky) a call log number is given. I always write this down together with the times and names of people I have spoken to because they are often subsequently required. All dealt with?? Yes, one would think so.

Now I take on the new contract with another company. An action replay of the previous scenario but with some added requirements of proving creditworthiness etc etc. A while later I still receive bills from the cancelled account despite all the paperwork being in your possession. It is often at this point I give up the will to live.

My point here is that it didn't used to be like this. You could go into a shop or office, sort out the account closure with a real person and open a new account in the same way. No, I am told this is not progress. It is much more convenient in the new modern way. More convenient for whom??

In my view 'Big is not Beautiful'.....Big is just a place where inefficiencies can hide' Try dealing with a court if you want to see real lack of responsibility

On line, or on the phone, a large number of organisations hide behind this aura of efficiency but in reality if one has a non-standard request it just cannot cope. In my experience it cannot even cope with everyday more mundane situations.

Antisocial Behaviour

There is no doubt about it, we are all becoming more antisocial and an obvious reason is that we are increasingly living in a more crowded environment. However that should actually be an incentive for more reasoned behaviour and more respect for one another. I seem to recall an experiment with caged rats that behaved very aggressively towards one another once the living density was increased. We are noticeably much more crowded in our everyday life and I remember playing cricket in the street with local friends and dads when there was so little traffic in the road. I now wait patiently outside my house for a break in the traffic to allow my car to join the queue.



Photo History



Talking about driving, haven't we all been in our car when a road narrowing ahead is indicated and cars still shoot by on our right determined to force their way in at the front of the queue and haven't we all driven close to the bumper of the car in front specifically not to let that anti-social ***into the line.

"No", I hear you say...well perhaps it's just me then. But driving in our own little insulated cocoon warm and comfortable probably divorces us from the real world outside and when someone violates our space we over-react.

Road-rage , supermarket rage, car-park rage, parking ragewe have all experienced some form of this and it is a rare person who has never been involved in this (or maybe, an exceptionally nice, tolerant, kind person...or a liar) Don't we all think to ourselves...life's too short to get heated up about this, and we have more important things to concern us and then that idiot comes speeding out of the side street and you obviously have to show your displeasure and blast him out of existence?

Transport generally in our crowded cities puts extreme pressure on all of us but if one has to travel in this overcrowded environment wouldn't it be more sensible to revert back to the now-forgotten very British democratic system of queuing. I remember when coming out of school (wearing our peaked caps), we were told to allow any waiting passengers on to the bus before we boarded. Imagine having to enforce that now.

Kids are no different now. It is us, we have been pressurised by peer pressure by pester power etc and eventually we take the line of least resistance. All my friends stay up until...../All my friends have an.....phone/ All my friends watch.....on TV (fill in the blanks).

Haven't we all been at a meal where everyone (and I include myself in this) surreptitiously look at our phones. Lynn recently asked if a friend was actually watching football scores during the dinner party we were giving and they replied "well, yes..but it's an important match....do you mind?".. Lynn replied that she did mind and was greeted with a laugh. They thought she was joking. She wasn't.

I recently suggested a basket for all mobiles when our guests entered to ensure an uninterrupted evening and was I embarrassed when my phone went off. All I heard was "basket, basket basket!!" So I number myself as one of the serial offenders.

On the tube I look at the seats opposite and everyone is totally immersed in their own screen. In Tokyo and Kyoto it was just the same. It is a rarity to see someone reading an actual paper book. In Japan it is possible to get a phone signal in the subway but no-one talk into their phones. It is anti-social. In Japan the carriage stopping positions is indicated on the platform with two yellow shoe images on the platform with a space between them The train stops and an orderly line of people disembark via the indicated space and then two lines of people get on. Anyone wanting to get on the train joins the shortest queue. No hassle, no pushing and yet a really packed environment that works.

We have notices everywhere reminding us that swearing, abusing and shouting at staff will not be tolerated. We are told not to put our feet on the seats in trains. Not to walk 'down' the 'up' staircase on tubes etc etc. But we always see plenty who totally ignore these signs. There shouldn't even be a need for these signs in the first place. We are now a race of antisocial 'me, me' self-obsessed people. I even noticed a popular advert that has the strap-line....."because I'm worth it" No, no-one is worth anything. One has to deserve something and even then it is not an automatic right where one is rewarded.

We are even encouraged in anti-social behaviour in our buying habits. Avoid the queue by paying extra to get a sought-after product before others. We are encouraged to think that a show is better on first night, a phone is worth queuing for at release date, special low store prices encourage unseemly behaviour and fights that are duly screened and encourage more to come on future sale dates. Do we actually believe that these are better products at lower prices? Or that the vast majority of 'bargains; are actually stock they couldn't shift in normal trading days or are 'special purchases'? Are we so stupid that our anti-social behaviour does not embarrass us?

When we had very few TV programmes the general standard was pretty good. OK they are dated now and obviously production quality has improved but the content level has plummeted to an all-time low.



Photo History



We seem fascinated by a voyeuristic-style of tv with embarrassing bodies being displayed for all to see. I personally do not want to see these unfortunate people. It was previously very antisocial to point out abnormalities, now we seem to revel in it.

The same is true of programmes where the lowest common denominator determines the programme popularity and radio programmes and the gutter press discuss the so-called z-list celebrities giving them their few ill-deserved minutes of fame. Fame for what?? Use of foul language, foul behaviour. This is car crash tv and if we let our kids watch it we should not be surprised when their behaviour imitates this.

As we sew, so shall we reap. Corny but true

I seem to have strayed from my original rant about covert surveillance and when re-reading these pages it is possibly obvious that I have an underlying distaste for the way that things are going and that is a common 'failing' of the old. But, I think that it is too easy to accept change for changes sake without looking at the possible repercussions and that is sometimes easier from a viewpoint where the thought process may be made with the extra ingredient of experience.

It is so easy to read this and put it down to the rantings of a silly old man but have you ever put your controversial thoughts down on paper like this where anyone can read them and ridicule them. If you have thoughts on life and any specific points you feel strongly about, put pen to paper and allow your self to be held to ridicule ...or hopefully maybe someone out there might even agree with you...but don't hold your breathe as the saying goes.

We probably get the society we deserve, but I for one think we deserve better. I know I hark on about days past but if nothing else, I have the benefit of age, of seeing it all before and more importantly, of seeing that we can do better

I alone cannot change society but I can try and lead by example.

I will not spit, swear at the doctor's receptionist, not eat a chicken curry on the tube leaving the boxes for someone else to pick up. I will not ride my moped on the pavement throwing acid when I nick someone else's bike.

I will smile at people walking their dogs saying "hi" as I pass. I will help lost tourists with maps and offer my seat to a pregnant lady.....

But I won't give up moaning.....because I'm a grumpy old man

August 2017